



ATTORNEY GENERAL'S

SCAM ALERT

A Consumer Protection Alert from Oregon Attorney General John Kroger

GREEN DOT SWEEPSTAKES SCAM

Attorney General John Kroger is warning Oregonians to not respond to unsolicited "sweepstakes" phone calls. Both the Marion County Sheriff's Office and the Department of Justice's Consumer Hotline have received reports about suspicious callers who notify consumers that they have won a sweepstakes and then instruct them to purchase a prepaid credit card to cover "taxes" or "fees" associated with collecting their cash prize.

One Marion County resident was contacted on his cell phone earlier this week by a con artist who asked him to purchase three \$1,000 Green Dot MoneyPak credit cards. In order to collect his sweepstakes prize, the man was told he must call an Idaho number and read the serial numbers off the back of the cards. Fortunately, he smelled a rat and called the Marion County Sheriff's Office instead.

Bogus sweepstakes and lottery offers are among the most common types of scams run by crooks who seek to rip off Oregon consumers. These operations are often run by perpetrators located outside the United States - making it very difficult for law enforcement agencies to track them down. In 2010 the Department received 1,054 complaints about international money schemes, with \$1,999,323 in reported losses - more than double the \$707,783 reportedly lost in 2009.

Attorney General Kroger offers the following advice to consumers when it comes to unsolicited telephone calls, mail or e-mail about a sweepstakes or lottery:

- Never pay to play in a sweepstakes.
- Never pay money to claim a prize.
- Do not give out your prepaid credit card number to someone you don't know (learn more about [Green Dot prepaid cards](#)).
- Participating in a foreign lottery is illegal and such lotteries often have close ties to organized crime.
- Beware of fake organizations that go by names similar to more widely-known groups in order to trick consumers.
- Government agencies do not sponsor sweepstakes.
- Beware of requests for information about your income, credit card ownership, or bank accounts as a condition of participating in a sweepstakes or lottery.
- Do not participate in sweepstakes or respond to advertisements that resemble a check, bill or invoice.
- Destroy fake sweepstakes or lottery offers by shredding or deleting them.

The Oregon Department of Justice Consumer Hotline, 1-877-877-9392, is a free resource for all Oregonians with consumer-related questions, concerns or complaints. If you or someone you know has fallen victim to a sweepstakes or lottery scam, please contact the Consumer Hotline for assistance.

Department of Justice thanks the [Marion County Sheriff's Office](#) for bringing this scam to our attention.